

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: YURI ISHIBASHI, retired social welfare worker

Yuri Ishibashi, Japanese, was born in Palama, June 15, 1915. Her parents were both immigrants; her father from Osaka; her mother from Yamaguchi, Japan. Her father had one of the first service stations in Kakaako. Yuri was one of five children. She moved to Kakaako at the age of three.

Due to illness in the family, she lived with her grandparents for a while. Her education included attendance at Pohukaina Elementary, Palolo Elementary, Washington Intermediate and McKinley High Schools. She also attended Kakaako-Alapai Union Japanese Language School for 11 years.

She worked in the pineapple cannery for a while. After graduation from high school, she lived in Hilo, where she helped out in an aunt's country store. She later worked as a salesclerk in a Honolulu general merchandise store and then as a public accountant. In 1944, she joined the Public Welfare Division, from which she retired in 1977.

TIME LINE

1915	birth: Palama, Oahu
1933	graduated from McKinley High School
1934	went to Hilo, Hawaii
1940	moved away from Kakaako
1944	commenced work as Public Welfare employee
1977	retired from Department of Public Welfare

Tape No. 3-33-1-78

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Yuri Ishibashi (YI)

Manoa Elementary School, Honolulu, Hawaii

January 24, 1978

BY: Gael Gouveia (GG)

GG: This is an interview with Yuri Ishibashi at Manoa Elementary School. The date is January 24th. And the interviewer is Gael Gouveia. Okay, I thought, today, maybe we could start if you would describe where you lived and what the service station was like. Is that...your earliest memories are of the service station, then?

YI: No, we were living in a camp, below that, before that. In Kakaako.

GG: Oh. Okay, well, why don't we start with when you first moved to Kakaako or first remember....

YI: Yeah, okay. That was, I don't even know the year, but anyway, when we started the service station it was '28, so it must have been. I went to, as I said, from second grade, Pohukaina. So, it must have been in the 1920's, 1922. Yeah, about that time. We were living in a lane and there was a camp there. You know, same kind of houses, rows of houses.

GG: Do you remember what the name of the lane was?

YI: Gee, I can't remember now. Ohe lane? I don't know whether it was going two ways. I know Ohe lane went above, Pohukaina Street, but, below where we lived, I can't remember now. (Laughs)

YI: I only remember Cooke Street because, ah, I don't know whether we....Oh, anyway, we moved over to, behind Cooke Street so our address was Cooke, I think. There was a Fujikawa Store there. And their daughter and I were very good friends so, we used to go back and forth there. Most of our neighbors were fishermen. And at that time, my father was driving a taxi. (Shows photo to interviewer)

GG: Okay, you're talking about the taxi stand. Do you know what street this was on?

YI: That's on Cooke Street. And Pohukaina.

GG: And do you know the approximate year?

YI: It would be about 1921, I think. 'Cause my brother is in that picture. He was a baby yet.

GG: Now, your father was a taxi driver?

YI: Driver, at that time, yes.

GG: I see. And people, you said because they didn't own cars much, they did use taxis?

YI: To go to the doctor or you know, for funerals and weddings...

GG: It looks like, is there a barber shop right next door?

YI: Yes, that was a barber shop there. And then in--you know these things. That's the kind of homes we lived in.

GG: That's a single-family house?

YI: They were duplexes. Had upstairs and downstairs and two families lived. Each family had upstairs room and downstairs. The downstairs was the living room and kitchen and upstairs was the bedroom. And, they used to have, I think, stairway inside the house so that, you know, each family could go...from downstairs to upstairs.

GG: You each had your own kitchen or did you share a kitchen?

YI: These are all own kitchens. Each family has a kitchen and a bath. You know, Japanese furo, right in the house. I don't know whether they remodeled it afterwards but, as far as I can remember, they had furo inside the house.

GG: And what about your toilet facilities? Were they inside?

YI: Ah, they were.... Yes. Uh huh.

GG: Inside. And, did you have electricity there then, too?

YI: Yes, we did. Yeah, that was in the '20's, so we did. We had electricity.

GG: And, the people that were your next neighbors, were they Japanese also?

YI: Yeah. Most of the time they were Japanese. I think they tried to (laughs) stay together. Ah, of course, because of the language barrier, too. But, in the other home, the first home that we were living in in that lane, the courtyard, next door, the next row of homes, there was, I think, a Hawaiian family. I brought another picture here that would show you the...

GG: This was second grade which was 1923.

YI: Second grade was 1923.

GG: And, in your class, you say that...

YI: There were 16 Japanese and 3 Chinese and the rest Hawaiians and Filipinos and Portuguese.

GG: Oh, and, did you all play together at recess?

YI: Uh huh. Yeah.

GG: And then, what did you do for your school lunches? Did they...

YI: I think, they had school lunch. But, many of us weren't use to eating that haole food, you know. So, we had difficulty. We used to take our lunches. And, other times, you know, we were allowed to go out and buy. And there was a store there, a Chinese store at the corner, and they used to sell, you know, (laughs) sandwiches like, very unhealthy, um, hash or deviled meat on cracker. And, we would buy that and eat rather than eat the school lunch. (Laughs) But, later as we grew up, I guess, we got used to it around sixth grade. We started enjoying the cafeteria food. I think, maybe we got a good cafeteria manager.

GG: Before that, now, when you would say, take your lunch from home, would you share it with friends?

YI: Ah, can't remember that. We might have because, you know the Hawaiians and Portuguese, they used to like the riceballs. So, we may have. I can't remember that part.

GG: Hm. And then, what about, do you recall, maybe if the Portuguese children brought Portuguese sweetbread or bread and jelly or something like that?

YI: Yeah.

GG: Did you try that, too?

YI: Gee, I can't remember that detail. Maybe I didn't mix as much although I had a very good Hawaiian girlfriend in that class that I came across about six years ago at work. And, we both remembered our first and last names.

GG: How was she your friend when you were younger? Did you do things together?

YI: Oh, not really. Only in school, I think. But, I did follow her to her

home, I guess, once or twice. I remember she lived close to the school. Yeah.

GG: The kids that you did play with, were they primarily from right in the area where you lived, too?

YI: Yes.

GG: Like next door neighbors?

YI: Yeah, right around the camp. And the other thing was that, we went to Japanese school, you know, after English school. So, we didn't have much time. You know, as soon as we got through Japanese school we would go home and then go to Japanese school. So that, I guess, that's why we got closer to the Japanese.

GG: Right. Did you walk after school with your Japanese friends to the Japanese school, or where was the Japanese school?

YI: Ah, no. Our home was in between so I think we went home first. And, we had something to eat. A snack or something. And then, we went to Japanese school.

GG: Hm. Did any other ethnic--kids from other ethnic groups ever go to the Japanese school?

YI: Ah, I can't remember any our age, but later, one or two, I think.

GG: Hm. Do you remember what nationality they were?

YI: Hawaiian.

GG: And did they go just because they wanted to find out or do you know why they went?

YI: I don't, maybe one of them I know. I think the parents wanted them to learn Japanese. That was in my sister's class, so it's way after, 13 years after. One of my sisters. And then, later in life, when I went to work for the welfare, there was a Hawaiian fellow, you know in the same office, and he told me that he grew up in Kakaako. He's much younger than I. But, he went to our Japanese school, he said.

GG: And, what was the name of the Japanese language school that you went to?

YI: Kakaako-Alapai Union Japanese Language School. The reason--I told you that history where we had to split...

GG: Right. Tell me again or a little more about it if you remember.

YI: That was, I don't know what year it was, but I think was problem about, um, I think the United States government said that the---I'm not too, you know, this may not be accurate now---what I gathered over the years. The American government said that they shouldn't teach, you know American citizens of Japanese ancestry from textbooks printed in Japan because, you know, they would propagate loyalty to the emperor and all that. So, a group of educators here, including our, you know, principal, our school principal, made textbooks here. They printed it here so that they would include in there material--we would grow up as good American citizens and not be Japanese subjects. Well anyway, that law, a group of educators said that that was unconstitutional. They were taking away the rights of, I think, the Japanese people. Or something, I don't know. And this--they wanted to appeal to the Supreme Court. And they hired a white attorney and they appealed. And the factions split there. One faction said don't appeal. We're immigrants, I think. You know, we're here. And, you know, the American government's good enough to take us in and we should abide by the law. The others said "no." We have a right to teach our children what we want so they appealed to the Supreme Court. And that, whether to appeal or not was the big question. It was very emotional I heard. It split the Japanese schools right down, all over, all over the Japanese school. We were very young, since I remember I was in the third grade. And, some of the parents were emotionally involved in that thing. And, when the Japanese schools got split, later on, the children on both sides would taunt each other. Well, we didn't really mean. We were friends....because in English school we were together and all that. But, we would say our Japanese school is better than yours.

(GG and YI laugh)

GG: Now, which faction, I believe you talked about one day something happened at the school.

YI: Yeah.

GG: Can you tell me about that?

YI: Yeah. Our faction was the one that said not to appeal. To abide by the law. And so they kicked our principal out, you know, and our parents, and they took the children out and went down to Pohukaina School.

GG: I see. And then how long did you hold classes then at Pohukaina School?

YI: Gee, I can't remember but we moved to the Halekauwila Street. You know, the parents came out, donated their labor, and built that--put up that school. The Kakaako-Alapai. And, the reason they call it "Kakaako-Alapai" was that, a lot of children from Alapai--the families from Alapai joined our principal's faction. So, it had to be Kakaako-Alapai. I think they named it that way.

GG: I see. Do you remember just where it is?

YI: It was on Halekauila and close to Ward, but not--you know where Muriel Kindergarten is now. Day-care center? Across the street. Makai of that.

GG: And then, when the split came, now your group went to Pohukaina School...

YI: Uh huh. We didn't have a school then, you see.

GG: Right. Now, did the parents get together and help to build another school then?

YI: Yeah, that's the one that I'm talking about now. Halekauwila. They built that. After years. I don't know how many years. I don't how many years we rented....

GG: Pohukaina School?

YI: ...we used Pohukaina, but...

GG: I see. Now, is there a different name, then, for the second school?

YI: That's the one, Kakaako-Alapai. The second school is Kaka--, the original is Kakaako Japanese Language School. Yeah, the one that was there first. And, they stayed there. Some of them stayed there. So, we were the faction that came out.

GG: I see. Was the group of parents split pretty much down the middle or did one side have a larger faction than the other in Kakaako or do you have any idea?

YI: I have no idea. But it seemed like, I think, must have. I'm not sure.

GG: Yeah. You were so young, but, do you remember having any feelings about what was happening or wondering why you were being taken off to Pohukaina School?

YI: Ah, the only thing that troubled me was that our friends were split, you know. I mean, we were...no, the only thing I can remember is that I had a very good friend. She's in this picture, too. She and I were short so we used to line up together and everything. And, her father was one of those that went on the other side. And she was marching with me to go with the teachers, see. And, he came and pulled her out of the line. And I remember crying over that, but then we remained friends. We are still friends.

GG: And how were the parents at that time or do you recall, say, the parents of your friend and the parents of--your parents? Did they not speak to each other?

YI: No, I don't think it was, I don't think it was that bad. I think only on that question, you know, they were--they believed in one way or the other, I think. Because, um, I don't know, they used to come and buy gas, I think. Those families. And especially after the years went by. I guess they didn't--it wasn't that serious.

GG: Now, in Japanese school, you of course were taught the language. Were you taught other things too, or how did the classes run?

YI: Ah, during the week, Mondays to Fridays, we were taught the language. Written and spoken. Not too much, but ah. And, on Saturdays, you know, we didn't have English school, regular school. So they got us together and girls learned sewing, you know, how to sew kimonos. And Japanese manners. And then, spoken Japanese. You know, we were speaking pidgin Japanese because our parents came as laborers and so they wanted to teach us real Tokyo Japanese at that time, too. And, as we grew older, or maybe that was summertime, they taught us art. Our principal was an artist, so.

GG: Who was the principal of your...

YI: Ah, Mr. Masuda. I brought this picture, too, because I think they were real big influence in Kakaako. I think they molded the character of the young people then, ah, our age.

GG: Hm. Can you elaborate or explain a little more what you mean?

YI: Yeah. They, you know, as I say, Kakaako was known for rough people and so they didn't want us to turn bad, delinquent and everything so they really lectured to us on behavior and how to be good citizens of America. How to abide by the law and even in morals, you know, they were always lecturing to us, and they got the girls together and they used to, when we having our sewing and, you know, manners and all that. They really pounded that into us.

GG: Now, you also mentioned that, or let me ask, did the two Japanese schools have the same feelings toward the bon dances? Or what, as I recall you said...

YI: Yeah.

GG: ...your school didn't participate?

YI: No, it wasn't that our school didn't participate, it was the principal's wife that was a strong influence on the girls and you know, the way she used to lecture to us about this is not good for you, this is good for you and all that. She was the one, I think. I don't think it was, it was the school policy or anything. I don't think it was. But, things like, ah, not eating while you're walking the streets and, you know, when you go to, when we used to have movie, you know.

School-sponsored movies and things like that. Like you weren't supposed to eat and, you know, things like that. They were kind of strict on us.

GG: But did the community hold, the Japanese community, hold bon dances...

YI: Yes, they did.

GG: ...every year?

YI: Yeah, they did.

GG: But, you were not taught the dancing at Japanese school?

YI: No. That was something--that was a community, or--it could have been some temple. You know, bon dances are religious, Buddhist religious festival, so, it's not really bad, you know, it's religious. But I think it's what happens to young people, I mean from Japan, too. My father used to say that, too, you know. I guess people feel free, and they usually cloistered and they, you know, they don't play together, before, the sexes--the two sexes. But, when they go out, you know, and it's usually at night so, they feel free, and I think things happen so I think, (laughs) they were very strict about that. But, I don't think anything bad happened. It wasn't that bad an influence but she strict, I think.

GG: Then, now, you went to Japanese school from what grade to what grade?

YI: From first grade to eleventh. One year before high school. Our school was first grade to the eighth grade was the elementary grades. And then three years from there was a...

GG: And then, you mentioned that you had belonged to an organization. Can you tell me about that and how it was founded?

YI: Yeah. I think it was more or less automatic that when you graduated from the school, you'd be a member of the alumni association.

GG: I see. And it had been going on for a long time?

YI: Yes.

GG: Then, before you joined.

YI: Yes, I think they had.

GG: And you said there was a group of you that did a lot of things together?

YI: Yeah, as I said, it was more social. Because somehow I think we

hit it off, that particular group, hit it off well, I think and so we just kept on meeting, you know, even after...oh, I don't know whether... yeah, even after we were through serving. It was sort of like a committee, standing committee or something like a board of directors or something like that. We didn't do any business, you know.

(GG laughs)

YI: We didn't do anything constructive.

GG: How many people were in the group altogether, or everybody that ever graduated?

YI: Oh, in the alumni association?

GG: Yeah.

YI: Yes, I think. Like any other alumni association. Those who would want to come out for different functions would come out and when it's a special occasion, like the time our principal--I was looking through the old things and--the time he left for Japan. He had to leave because he had to take over his family line. He was the heir to a 300 year old historical home and all that, so, he had to go back. And so his family all went back except one daughter remained here. She didn't want to go back to Japan so. Even my classmate who was born here, went back too, and she's still living there. But when they left the whole alumni association, everybody came out and I (shows picture). They were really respected and revered. And this is the Kakaako alumni. And this, you know, we used to publish this kind of paper. See, this is the crowd that came out to send them off when they went back to Japan. In 1936? Yeah, 1936, I think.

GG: And this paper was put out by the language school?

YI: Uh huh.

GG: The students helped work on it?

YI: I think most of it the teachers must have done it. Because I notice that you have, you know, compositions by students here. Most of them on leaving of the principal. Have you heard of Wasato Harada? He's a lawyer now in the district court.

GG: Yes, I think we have heard the name.

YI: Ah, what was his English name? We just remember them by their Japanese names. Anyway, this is his...since he was first in his class that time. He was after our time but.

GG: Ah, these are nice. Well, perhaps if you'll let us we'll photocopy them.

YI: Yeah. They did a lot for Kakaako.

GG: And they left you said, in 1936 and then they didn't come back after that?

YI: No.

GG: Can you tell me more now about the neighborhood. Your father and the service station itself. What was it like? Did it have one pump?

YI: Yeah. In the beginning, I was talking to my mother today and she said, right in that location where...I think, she said that it started more or less like, um, the cars needed gas. You know, they would have to go way off to buy so, in order to more or less to accommodate the taxis, I think. They put in a pump in that corner over there. That's why, I think, I don't know whether it was...I'm sure it was a legitimate business because he used to go the tax office (laughs) and pay taxes but. I remember they put in a pump in that corner over there. And she said later on they could run more in the back. It was just that corner. And, you know, right next to the barber shop, right here, was the repair shop. Another man ran it. A repair shop. In partnership with my father who ran the service station. But that man died. So somebody else took over.

GG: Do you know where the other pumps were?

YI: Oh, the pump was in this corner here. (Shows photo) And one in here. This place was opened so that the cars can go in, you know, corner like this. Drive in like this and go out. This was Cooke Street. And this is Pohukaina here. And so the cars would come in this way and go out. Or come in from the other way. Or they could park, you know, right along the sidewalk and have them filled.

GG: Now, did you say that you had a house right by here?

YI: Yes.

GG: For awhile, too?

YI: On this side here. Right next to the barber shop there was a house. There was a camp around here, too. And, in the back here was a camp, too. And then, right next to this was our home. And there was an empty lot where they used to have a, um, trucking firm to haul the tuna catch. Fish, anyway, from Kewalo Basin to the market. Fish market, you know. And so they had a fleet of trucks there. And we had a wide open space in the back there. Well, in between that there was a big parking lot. So, that's where I learned to drive.

GG: And now, when you talk about the camp that you lived in right there, do you know how many houses were in the camp?

YI: Yeah, one, two, three, four. With ours it was four. And then, right next door--they were owned by different people. The one behind the service station was one---just two there. Two. And the place we lived in had one, two, three, four, and five. Five.

GG: And now, when you speak of like, four homes, is that four duplexes, so it would be eight families?

YI: No. Those homes were--no, they were duplexes. That's right. It's two. Two houses, duplexes. That's right. But, that's right. Our home, too, it was a duplex. Upstairs and downstairs and there's a family living next door. And later, when they moved out and our family got big, yeah, they opened up--we rented the whole thing. Yeah, that's why it changed afterwards.

GG: You didn't own it then?

YI: No, we used to pay the rent.

GG: And, from an individual owner or did like Bishop Estate have that area?

YI: I think Bishop Estate owned that area and was, maybe sublea--leased to someone and we used to pay the rent to that family.

GG: I see. And do you remember now being in the service station? Were you allowed to go over there? Or did you have to go over there?

YI: Hmm, not really; but the only time that we were to go there, I mean we had to be there was when my parents were having supper. And so all of us kids would go out there.

GG: Would you take turns or you all went?

YI: Oh, whoever wanted to go out, I think. But, we had fun there so I think everybody wanted to go.

(GG laughs)

YI: Rather than stay back and wash dishes. (Laughs)

GG: What did you have fun doing there?

YI: Oh, just running around, I think. All the neighborhood children came out so, I don't know what we did. I know some games we used to play, the game that we used to play. We were just running around, mostly. But, I remember the boys playing, you know that game, pee-wee.

GG: Uh huh.

YI: That and in front. Right there in that street. It was safe those days. You know, hardly any cars.

GG: Right. Did--Do you know how long it was before your father added the second pump?

YI: Ah, I can't remember now--

GG: Hm. But, he mostly serviced the taxis in the beginning, but then cars started coming?

YI: Yeah. You know, I was telling you about that firm, that trucking firm. You know, that was a big customer. And then, we had some store owners who used to have trucks. You know, a lot of people, I mean he did pretty well I guess. It wasn't that big, you know. But then, you know, more homes, more people came to live in Kakaako and at one time it was really a densely populated place, I think. And like I told you about that Holy Ghost Festival they had on Queen Street? Every year we would have that festival. I mean, they'd be running around, so from early in the morning till late at night...come...

GG: The trucks would come for gas?

YI: Yeah, yeah. And, he liked them. My father liked the businessmen, too. So, he remembered all those Portuguese men. They remembered him, too.

GG: And you said, also that, during the Holy Ghost Festival they would bring things to him?

YI: Yeah, yeah. I guess because he donated money because they were good customers. So he would donate to their festival. And so they would bring chunks of meat, raw meat and sweetbread.

GG: And did your family eat that?

YI: Uh huh. Yeah. It was a big piece of meat.

GG: Oh. Do you know whether he participated? From what I understand, they used to have like an auction. Did he donate things to be auctioned off or do you recall?

YI: I think he donated money.

GG: Now, when your folks were having dinner and you folks, you children were at the--who handled the pumps if a customer would come in?

YI: Ah, I had a brother who is five years younger than I, maybe we did, too. Many times, the customer themselves would pump their own gas.

GG: I see. Do you have any idea what they charged for gas at that time?

(YI and GG laugh)

YI: I don't, you know. I can't remember. 20 cents a gallon? A dollar for five gallons, or something like that?

GG: And did your mother pump gas, too?

YI: Uh hm, uh hm. Sometimes.

GG: And, did she help out in other ways there too?

YI: Ah, no. Just pump gas I think.

GG: And did they wash windows and little things, extra service?

YI: They didn't have windows.

GG: Oh!

(GG and YI laugh)

YI: I think. But they did have chamois skin I remember. Maybe, they did wipe the front, you know. Just the front windshield. Yeah, and I remember they were fixing tires and things like that.

GG: Now, did you go to a church with your parents at that time? Or temple?

YI: Yeah, we used to--my father was a member of Makiki Church. So, you know the old one on Kinau Street. So, we were driven there every Sunday to go to Sunday School.

GG: He had his own car then?

YI: Yeah, I guess...

GG: One of the taxis?

YI: Yeah, I remember he said he owned a car ever since the time I was little, I think. He even talked about the kind that you crank. And then, I think even the gas lamps or something? I think he mentioned that. So, I remember riding in cars since I was little.

GG: Do you remember going for long rides?

YI: Yeah, he used to take us around the island every New Year's. That was our family outing once a year and every Friday night. That's--our family remembers that. Everyone of us, because every Friday night. Because Friday we don't have school the next day. We had Japanese school but that's, you know, more like sewing and things like that. We didn't have to study so he would pile us in the car and take us riding all over town. And, we would end up, summer months, we would end up in some ice cream stand. He'd buy us ice cream

cones. And winter months we would end up somewhere in town where they had those, you know, noodle stands? Or some Chinese saimin shop, small saimin shop and have noodles. That was something that we looked forward to. Our family. And like Easter he would take us up to Punchbowl. You know, close to Punchbowl where the cross is lit up. Things like that. You know, it didn't cost him money. We weren't rich so, things like that he did for us.

GG: Were you allowed to take friends with you? Or was it just the family?

YI: Um.... Yeah, we may have had friends along. Yeah.

GG: How many of you children were there?

YI: Five of us.

GG: Ah. And your mother would go on these outings too?

YI: Yeah.

GG: Oh. And what was it like going around the island? Do you remember?

YI: Oh, yeah. We would be dressed in our nice dresses and then, it was just riding around the island and stopping where we can. I remember like Hauula side. They used to have some wild flowers like daisies and we'd stop and pick. Stop somewhere on Haleiwa place to have lunch. And all over, you know, there'd be burning firecrackers. The children would be playing firecrackers. That's right.

GG: Were the---oh, New Year's. That's why the firecrackers, and, right.

YI: Yeah. I wonder if there were other families in other cars together? Maybe some years we may have had other families, taxi people.

GG: Did you have other family here, too? You know, aunties or uncles?

YI: Yeah, we had--my mother's sisters and brother. And, the parents were here. So, we used to go--oh yeah--that's another good memory we have. Every Sunday, from afternoon we'd be going up there. They were living up in Kaimuki. So we'd go up to Kaimuki and have dinner with the family. Grandpa and grandma. And come home late at night. That was something very...I really enjoyed it.

GG: Did other families in the area do those kinds of things, too, or do you recall?

YI: See, most of them, their grandparents were in Japan.

GG: I see.

YI: Like my mother's family--you see, she was brought here by her parents when she was one year old. So, her parents were here and like my aunties were all English-speaking. You know, they were born here. Whereas, the friends around me, most of their relatives were still in Japan. I mean, they may have had, yeah, some of them came, you know, in family--I mean, two brothers would come... So, they would have uncles and aunts. But then they would be all Japanese-speaking. But, in our case, for a time, we lived together, too, you know with my grandparents or close by, Kaimuki. And so, we were close to our grandparents.

GG: Did neighbors do things together in the evenings or afternoons or Saturdays or Sundays?

YI: Gee, I don't remember but I remember going--just playing with friends.

GG: Uh hm.

YI: But, as far as families getting together, like. Well, they may have gone on picnics together. I saw some pictures of families getting together, going out to Haleiwa and, having picnics together. As a community, Kakaako, I don't know whether we did that or not.

GG: What about playing cards?

YI: Oh yeah. We used to get together going on picnics with families.

GG: With families that weren't family, you mean, with friends?

YI: Yeah, friends. You know, neighbor.

GG: Did they play cards at all?

YI: I think the men folks played. I don't remember too much.

GG: And then as you grew older, say into junior high school or high school, then did you associate again with people right in the close neighborhood?

YI: Well, I had one good friend right near. And she became my sister-in-law. My sister got married to her brother. The others, after a while, when they went to another Japanese language school, after high school they would go, then we kind of drifted apart. The ones that went to Japanese language school together until the eleventh year...we were pretty close. You know, we did things together. You know, like going to shows and. You know, we did a lot together.

GG: And did they live fairly close or did they live, maybe several blocks away?

YI: About one or two blocks away.

GG: But it was the same general area?

YI: Uh huh. Yeah.

GG: Where did your mother do her grocery shopping?

YI: Oh, we had a store close by, about a block away. The butcher shop was across the street. And then, they used to have these vegetable peddlers coming in their trucks? So, she would buy from them.

GG: Did she raise any vegetables herself or did you have a garden?

YI: No, I don't think we did. I don't think there was any... Just a small space on the side but I don't think we had anything growing.

GG: And what kind of chores did you folks, you children have?

YI: Yeah. Just washing dishes and sweeping and mopping the house, I think. Yeah.

GG: So, how long did you, the group from the Japanese school, now you said there were seven or eight of you who got together frequently... that was part of the Japanese alumni?

YI: Uh huh.

GG: Japanese School Alumni Association?

YI: Uh huh.

GG: But it was just a small group within the group...

YI: Uh huh.

GG: What kind of things did you do together?

YI: Oh, we just went to some married couple's home and had dinner together and just sat around and talked. Some played cards and, you know, just talked mostly. Most of the time, almost every week, we went to see a show. Waikiki Theater was new at that time.

GG: When was this?

YI: Between '35 to '40, when the war broke out. I think, we split when the war broke out, I think we didn't get together. And the boys went off to war. Some of the younger ones didn't have to worry, so.

GG: Was there a theater in Kakaako prior to that?

YI: Yes, there was one but we never went there because we (laughs) didn't like it. I mean, it was teeny...it was old already. Yeah, we hardly went there. I mean after we grew up, you know.

GG: What about when you were younger?

YI: We only went when there was a good movie and the teacher said that that was all right. Like "Ben Hur" and things like that. Otherwise, our Japanese language school teacher said, "It's not good for you." (Laughs)

(GG laughs)

GG: Could you maybe talk about the woman's role. Now, did most of the women help out their husbands in some way in the community or were most of the women housewives?

YI: I think most of the women were housewives. There were a few who owned, you know, little shops like snack shop. There were some-- there was a delicatessen there. And a woman was there with her husband in the shop. There's a barber shop. Not this one. This one (refers to barber shop in photo next to taxi company where Dad worked) was run by a widower. That man didn't have a wife. He ran it himself. But, there was another barber shop that had-- oh, this family, the husband--the father was a vegetable vender. And the mother was a barber, there. That's her barber shop. If they owned business, then the women would help in the shop. But, many of them were, the husbands were fishermen. So, the wives stayed at home.

GG: The barber shop that was next to your father's service station. Was it a Japanese man who ran that shop?

YI: Uh huh. Yeah.

GG: And were most of his customers Japanese or were they all different nationalities?

YI: That I can't remember. I can't remember.

GG: Were there just sort of like two barber shops in the general area there or do you recall?

YI: On that street there were only two. But, further down toward Queen Street there were Magoon block, yeah. They had some more there. But I can't remember now whether other people came there, too. I cannot recall.

GG: In those days, now, would he have had to have some training to become a barber or do you just set up a shop or do you have any idea?

YI: (Chuckles) I have no idea.

GG: Yeah. I wonder if you could tell me how you got your first job and what your job was.

YI: Oh, yeah, my first job was in the cannery when I was going to school, high school. And that was depression years, in 1932, '31. When I was sophomore, I think. But anyway, we had to go down to the cannery, getting up at five o' clock in the morning and go down for three weeks. Stand there and then they would pick. "That's all." So, we'd go home. But like the next day. Get up five o' clock. A neighbor and I went. Then, finally after the third week, they picked us. And that was only for night shift because day shift was all filled. And so my father would drive us about six o' clock in the afternoon. We would start at seven, I think. So, he would drive us there. And, in the morning he was there to pick us up to bring us home.

GG: And what was your job at the cannery?

YI: Oh, just packing pineapple. I wasn't a very good worker. I was weak so. (Laughs) I had to pack. But the good ones would trim. That, I think, you get paid better.

GG: Do you remember what your first pay was?

YI: Oh, it was 13 cents an hour, I think, 13 cents and, you know, because we were night shift they gave us a, one cent more than the dayshift. And then, if the table, you know, the quality control or whatever, they check our packing. And if we made few errors, the table that made the least number of errors, got another, a bonus. You know, for one cent more. So, oh, sometimes we earned 15 cents. Our table was pretty good. We usually got that bonus.

GG: Did you think it was hard work at the time?

YI: I thought, "Oh, this isn't the way to earn money." I really didn't like it, so after one year I didn't go back. (Laughs)

GG: And then, you got a job, I think you said as a salesclerk?

YI: Yeah, yeah, '33, I graduated. So, '34 I went to help my aunt. There was no job. So, I went to help my aunt in Hilo. You know, there's a country store. And then, I came back and got a job in a general merchandise store as a salesclerk.

GG: And where was the store?

YI: Ah, in Pawaa. It was called Standard Trading Company? It had from, ah, buttons and thread to hammer and nails and... From chicken wire and everything.

GG: Old general store, huh.

YI: Yeah. It was...

GG: How did you get that job?

YI: Ah, I think I--through a want ad, I think. As I said, the people who were working there got fed up with the boss. And they all quit on him one time. And, I went in there. I mean, a whole new force went in, I think.

END OF INTERVIEW.

REMEMBERING KAKA'AKO: 1910-1950

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